

The Invitation to the Needy

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Date: 11 August 2019

Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] We'll turn back with me to Isaiah 55. You'll find the passage on page 615. And we're going to look at the invitation that we read here at the start of the chapter.

We hear the word of God uttered, Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. And he who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. And so on, come, everyone who thirsts. Those of you who were here last Sunday morning, remember we were listening to the voice of Jesus as he gave that greatest invitation of all when Jesus said, Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

And that invitation that we heard again last Lord's Day morning, that invitation from Jesus with that great purpose to relieve the burden of sin, to relieve the burdens of life's troubles, to give that rest in him that we know is true and sure and gives full satisfaction that we find only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I want to continue this theme of invitation and do so for the next certain few Sunday mornings. Because, you know, we marvel and must marvel at the free offer of salvation that God grants to you who are weak, to you who are incapable of securing salvation by yourself.

[1 : 38] And, you know, as we continue to marvel at the gift of salvation, God's gift of salvation, then I want to turn to this passage here, turn to the Old Testament and look at these great words that we just read there in Isaiah 55.

Most of you know them. I mean, they've been words that have comforted so many through the ages. And I suppose when we read them at first we think, well, they sound very contradictory. You know, come buy something. If you don't have money, how can you buy something? If you don't have money to use to buy, well, at first they might seem contradictory, yet they're utterly consistent with the gospel offer of salvation for all who can't save themselves, who can bring nothing to earn salvation.

So, these are great words for you for me to focus on this morning. They're words of encouragement. They're words of assurance. They're words from the one who's true and for you to respond to that truth in faith.

So, let's hear God's word. Let's hear God speak to us. And in hearing, respond to that word.

Respond with thankfulness. Respond with faithfulness. Respond with love to this great invitation.

[2 : 55] Three things we notice here. And the first is the invited. Who are invited? The invited of the Lord. Now, just think of the setting here.

Just imagine. One of the great professors, Clement Graven, always told us, use your imagination when you read scripture. Well, use your imagination here. Just imagine the scene.

There's a marketplace in this Middle Eastern town. And there's stalls everywhere. Have you ever been to a Middle Eastern marketplace? You know, there's stalls everywhere. And the sellers have got all their wares in front of them, all their goods, and they're calling out to the customers who are going by to come and buy.

And, you know, the atmosphere is electric. All the sights, all the sounds, all the smells, and they're all competing for, you know, for the customer's attention. And, of course, I'm sure there'll be haggling, you know, happening, trying to knock down the prices.

There's going to be bargains to be had. But one stall is different. In this stall, there's water, there's wine, there's milk, there's even bread on offer.

[4 : 03] But the ultimate bargain of bargains is offered. Everything offered in that stall is free. Everything's free. All these basic necessities of life are free.

And it just seems too good to be true, but it's real. So, those who are mingling in the marketplace, are they going to take up the offer? Or are they going to reject it?

And that's the picture that we find here in verse 1. It's, if you like, a lesson here scripted from the real background of the Middle Eastern marketplace. But, of course, what we have here is this deep spiritual meaning.

And it's that meaning that we want to explore. And explore for our eternal benefit. So, who's giving this invitation? Well, obviously, somebody's calling out to others.

Someone's calling out for the attention of others. Someone who's got something so important to offer that we simply cannot ignore. Who's doing the offering and the goods that are being offered?

[5 : 06] Well, who is calling here? Of course, it's God. God's calling. And it's an urgent call because you see there, the first verse, come. Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

Interesting, the original language, the first come. It's a different word to the second come. I won't bore you with the details. But it's actually addressed to individuals. The first come.

In the old versions, it was whole, but we don't use that word nowadays. But come, come. It's an urgent call to individuals. First of all, you, you as an individual, you respond, you're being called to, to purchase something that's got no price.

And then there's the second come there towards the end of the verse. And this time it's addressed to all. It's a plural come. And, you know, it's to all peoples, all nations, all languages.

But notice, who are being called? Well, if you look carefully, there are two kinds of people who are being called. The first group, if you like, are those who are thirsty.

[6 : 11] Those who are in desperate need of refreshing. The thirsty whom Jesus would later mention. Remember when He said that they would be refreshed by Him, they'd be wholly satisfied, and them never to thirst again.

Remember what Jesus said, whoever believes in Me shall never thirst. And again, if anyone thirsts, let them come to Me and drink. That thirsting for salvation, that thirsting for new life, and you know that you have that thirst, that desire, that true desire for eternal life, that thirst that the world can't quench.

And Jesus is saying to you who thirst, He's saying, come to Me. And no one else, but come to Him and drink. And you think, as we were saying to the children, you know, works won't satisfy, money won't satisfy that thirst, that thirst for salvation.

Relationships won't give you the satisfaction that only Jesus can give you. Is that you this morning? You know that you're spiritually drained. You know that there's a deficiency in your life.

You know that you're in that need. And listen to the voice that's calling you. It's calling you to the life-giving waters that only Jesus offers.

[7 : 35] The blessing, that blessing of salvation when you're converted, when the Holy Spirit draws you to the Lord Jesus and unites you to Christ and gives you what you've never had before.

That quenching, that quenching of your thirst, that new life in Jesus, that life that fully satisfies. Drink from the water of life that Jesus offers.

And never be thirsty in your soul again. You know, it's been said, and maybe I should speak to someone more knowledgeable in this, but it's been said that a human being, well, generally speaking, can live without water, physical water, for only about three days.

I'm sure there are variations in that, but generally speaking. But nobody, but nobody can know eternal life without drinking from the water, the spiritual water of life.

No one can live without imbibing the salvation that Jesus offers. Jesus is offering you that life and offering it to you free of charge.

[8 : 44] But then, you might be asking, well, okay, we're told here that the person who's doing the inviting is saying, well, come, no money. I mean, the person who's being invited, he's got no money and yet he's been told to come.

I mean, how can you buy something without money? How can you buy something that has got no price to it? Even this worthless thing even cost me a certain amount, but how can you buy something that's so precious without anything, without anything at all?

Well, think of it like this. What's happening here? The Lord is saying to you who are poor, you who've got nothing to offer for the gifts that I'm offering you.

Jesus is saying, you come. Come to Him as you are. Come in faith. Know the words, nothing in my hand I bring simply to the cross I cling.

And how is that possible? Well, again, as we said to the children, because Jesus has paid it all for you. The price that He's paid it was by His blood, by His death on the cross.

[9 : 51] You pay nothing. He paid everything. even His very life. He paid even His very life so that you might have life eternal.

And as we say with all reverence, that is the ultimate bargain. Because what you need most in your life, what I need most in my life, more than physical food, more than physical drink, more than even health and wealth and home and occupation, what you need most in your life is free.

So you who are poor, you who are spiritually poor, you bring nothing for your salvation. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

But there's another group mentioned here, another group who are being called. And it's not the poor in spirit, not those who know their need of satisfaction through what's been offered to them for eternal life.

But what do we find in verse 2? We find the self-righteous. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which doesn't satisfy you?

[11 : 03] You see the difference? In verse 1, the call is to those who've got no money to buy and eat. Those who know they can give nothing for their salvation.

But look at the call in verse 2. It's to those who do have money, who do indulge in self-satisfied living that really, as you know, ultimately doesn't satisfy at all.

That gnawing emptiness of that God-shaped space in the heart of man that's filled with, you know, what I reckon to be, you know, all the answers to life's happiness.

But in actual fact bring the soul down and down to an emptiness that only Jesus can fully and truly fill. So who are the second group here in verse 2?

Well, they're still thirsty, obviously. There's still that spiritual need for wholesome refreshment and salvation. But notice, they're going at the wrong way.

[11 : 59] They think they can buy their way to salvation. It's the kind of mindset we find in the book of Acts. Remember that man called Simon. Remember he offered money to Peter to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And remember Peter's reply, may your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. It all brings us down to the truth that nobody can earn salvation.

Works don't achieve salvation. We see that in Isaiah here or of course when we hear the Lord Jesus speak in the New Testament when we read the whole of Scripture when our Reformation leaders fought so courageously to proclaim to people who've been kept under the oppression of a works righteousness church.

And that teaching that our spiritual forefathers fought to establish in the hearts of the people, people like Mark Luther, people like John Calvin, people like Ulrich Zwingli, they all rediscovered that great doctrine, that great truth that salvation cannot be bought by anything that we offer.

It's all of Christ. He and He alone has made it possible. His blood is the currency that earns salvation for sinners such as you and such as me.

[13 : 24] And that is that comfort and strength to you who are a believer. But you know, if anyone is thinking that eternal rest, eternal peace can be earned by good works, well, look at what the prophet Isaiah says, why do you labor for that which doesn't satisfy?

And you know, there's nothing more distressing, nothing more hurtful, you know, to see and to hear people who, or to hear of people who've departed and to, certainly departed this life.

People who've made no profession of faith in Jesus, people who've turned their back on the Savior in their life, people who live for self, and then somehow for them to be ushered into the eternal rest of glory, simply on the basis, well, they were a good sort, or, you know, they were nice, they harmed nobody.

And that is a distress to you who know that salvation cannot be earned, and you who know the reality, the truth of the hell of separation.

Now, it's anybody who's insisted that simply good works were enough for their salvation. No, we believe the Scriptures, we trust in God's Word.

[14 : 43] So, what is being offered that speaks of this great salvation? Well, you see in verse 1 there's a trio, if you like, of liquids. There's waters, wine, milk, and then I suppose we could add bread as well that's inferred there in verse 2.

And we've already mentioned the, well, we've read of these things, waters, wine, milk, these of course are symbolic, they're symbolically speaking of the rich blessings that the poor and needy are being offered by the God of all grace.

So, what are these items referring to? What are they showing? Well, we've already mentioned the gift of spiritual refreshing, you know, the quenching, the thirst-quenching gift of salvation that's made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit that leads you to the Lord Jesus by faith in Him. But yeah, I think there's something more that we can say on this because, I think we missed this, look at what's been offered, it's waters, again, plural, notice waters and surely that indicates the abundance, the abundance of the provision that God gives to you who are spiritually poor and needy.

You know, earlier in Isaiah chapter 12 verse 3, the prophet Isaiah, he spoke of the joy that the believer has when he draws water from the wells of salvation.

[16:13] In other words, that plentiful supply of grace, that plentiful supply that truly satisfies and fully satisfies so that you don't need to be afraid to come before God and be afraid that somehow there's not blessing for you.

No, God's fountains of blessing are rich, they're rich in volume, there is sufficient mercy for all who would come to Him by faith. The waters.

And then, what are we told? There's wine, there's milk, the wine that symbolizes, you know, that which gladdens the heart. We sing that in Psalm 104, the wine that gives joy, the joy of the Lord, that's, well, the joy that's offered in the gift of salvation.

And then there's milk, the milk that speaks of nourishment, of plenteous provision. Remember when the Israelites were promised, what they would receive when they went into the promised land, remember they were told that this was a land that was flowing with milk and honey, and we even suggest that the use of milk here is, you know, that symbolizes the blessing of salvation, that speaks of the health-giving properties that we know, that the spiritual health that we know just as a baby feeds in milk for his or her health, then we know that we're given the milk of salvation for your spiritual health, for your spiritual welfare and well-being.

And I think we can add the bread too that certainly described there in verse is, certainly verse 2 anyway, something that we're told to come by and eat and then what are we eating?

[17:55] We're eating bread and of course, not spending money, we're told, why do you spend money on that which isn't bread? Well, you know the bread, bread is the basic sustenance of life and of course bread comes to symbolize life itself.

Remember what Jesus said when he said that he is the bread of life, the bread from heaven, the source of life in all its fullness, the one who gives life, the one who gives eternal life, one whom you feed on by faith.

You'll be nourished in your souls by the one who is the bread of life, the one who sustains you to live for him. So the offering there that the Lord gives and promises is for your good, for his glory. He is offering you life. He's offering that which satisfies your deepest need for spiritual refreshing, spiritual feeding, spiritual nourishment, the joy in the Lord that no one else can offer.

Is that what you're craving? Are you craving that joy in the Lord? Are you craving that spiritual health? Are you craving that nourishment, that feeding in Christ?

[19:09] Are you just content with, well, again to use the imagery, that the food that doesn't satisfy, the cravings of false religions, of idols of the mind, of short-term highs that don't give any true satisfaction?

I mean, we're living in a world where the marketplace, there's still a marketplace, we're living in the world of the marketplace of the senses, you know, the marketplace of the mind.

And, you know, that you're being continually bombarded with, you know, pleasures that will merely leave you to ask for more and you're never satisfied. The lusts of the eyes, they entice you only to leave you wanting more and never truly satisfied.

Some of you have been in Edinburgh recently. The city's now in full flight, we might say that if you like the vanity fair of the 21st century, and you're seeing, you know, the throngs, the crowds, the, if you like, the pleasure seekers wanting more and more of the short-term fixes to tickle the senses, to seek to find that soul satisfaction that cannot bring true joy and peace and contentment because only the Lord Jesus can bring.

You know, there's a very telling verse in Proverbs 27, verse 20, it says this, never satisfied are the eyes of the man. Again, never satisfied are the eyes of man.

[20 : 38] The eyes that see, that see what? That see temptation, temptation to greed, temptation to self-satisfaction, temptation to sensual pleasure, to want more and more of the world and the world that can't truly satisfy.

Have you ever drunk salt water? You know that it never satisfies your thirst, only increases your thirst. So again, the craving of the world's pleasures in that marketplace of the senses only increases your thirst for more and more of the sin-stained world that we live in and it leaves you empty and it will eventually destroy you.

But we thank God that Jesus offers that which truly satisfies. He's the bread of life that gives life, He sustains life. He's the one who calls the sinners in that dry parched land.

Take of the water, take that which truly refreshes, truly satisfies your thirst. And Jesus is the wine that gladdens the heart.

He's the milk that brings health to your needy soul. And since He is the one who truly satisfies, then, well, we have to respond. You have to respond. You've got to respond to what He's offering you.

[21 : 56] And you see that in verses 2 and 3, that urgent response. The six commands, I'll look at them very briefly, but the promise that all who respond in obedience, well, what are we told?

I will make with you an everlasting covenant. Look at the response with which we'll finish. Listen diligently to me. Let's look at them very, very briefly because they're commands. Listen diligently to me towards the end of verse 2.

In other words, listen with great attention. Don't wander off in your thoughts. Don't, you know, let your mind just drift away. Don't be enticed by the lures of the world around you.

You know, like, back to the beginning, like the traders in the marketplace, you know, all calling out to the various customers to buy this, to buy that. No, but there's only one voice to heed, one voice to listen to.

Only one voice to pay that closest of attentions to. Whose voice is that? It's the Lord of grace. Are you listening to His voice? Because He's urging you to pay close attention because He's the one who gives life.

[23 : 06] So shut out all these voices, the others who'll seek to lure you away with all these false promises of, you know, true satisfaction because it can never satisfy anything that is not the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we're told, listen, listen diligently to me. And then what? Eat what is good. The second command, nourish yourself. Nourish yourself in the goodness of what God provides.

And what does He provide for your nourishment? He provides His Word, His good Word. He says, eat what's good, His good Word, His good truth, is good love, His good grace because the God who gives what is good is good.

He gives what's good for your soul. He gives what's good for your life. Good that destroys the evil of sin's power.

Why are we still consuming, you know, all these things that are not good? it's what the Apostle John referred to in his first letter when he referred to these things as the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride in possession.

[24 : 19] He says, all that pride, all these desires that aren't from God but from the world that's passing away along with the desires of the world.

Why is it that all these desires still fill the picture house of our mind? No, we're told, eat what is good and following on from that, delight yourselves in rich food.

In other words, you know, take, take, yes, sinless pleasure in what God has given you in Christ.

Take what is true pleasure that truly and fully satisfies so that you can say, I lack nothing.

So you can say that He's given me everything I need. so that you can say that less cannot satisfy and more is not desired. In other words, less than Christ and His salvation cannot ever satisfy you and more than Christ and His salvation.

Well, there's nothing more than Christ and His salvation. So you don't need to desire anything more than the Lord Jesus. Can you say that from the heart? Are you delighting yourself in Him?

[25 : 26] Is He your first love? Is He your chief joy? Because He is who gives you what's truly rich. So, verse 3, another command, incline your ear. Listen well, listen with that view to act upon what you have heard from the Lord and then come to me, says Jesus.

Verse 5, the fifth command. In other words, leave everything else behind. Go to the one who's calling you. Go to Him, nobody else. And when you come to the Lord Jesus, your Savior, you'll

know that life-changing joy as we see in this last command, hear that your soul may live. Because it's that important. There's nothing more important, nothing more crucial than to come to Jesus. He's calling you even now.

Come to me, says Jesus, all you who are heavy laden and I'll give you rest. If anyone thirsts, let them come to me and drink. Yes, these words were uttered many, many years ago.

But they're still being uttered by the living Lord Jesus. Without pages of Scripture, they reveal His call. To you who have ears to hear, let them hear what Jesus is saying to you.

[26 : 43] Still the same words you're hearing now as were first uttered all these years ago and will be uttered until Jesus returns. Come to Him. Will you not come to Jesus?

And when you come to me, promises that greatest of blessings that we see finally in verse 3. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

What's God promising here? He's promising an eternal, unbreakable relationship with you who respond by faith in that call to come to Jesus.

He's promising steadfast love. He's promising that utter commitment to you. He's promising you a love that knows no limits.

He's promising a love that saves you and keeps saving you. He's promising you a sure love that endures forever. It's that commitment that God showed to King David.

[27 : 44] Remember when God promised that He'd establish David's kingdom forever and that promise fulfilled in the coming of the Son of David, the Lord Jesus. And so the human descendant, if you like, of King David.

And so with that relationship, that covenant relationship that God makes with you, you who come to Him in faith, it's there, it's there, it's been given to you, the blessing of God's covenant love.

It's been secured by the Lord Jesus, secured by His death on the cross. And of course confirmed in His resurrection from the dead. That call that's been given to you, come to the Savior.

And notice how many times you see that call even in these verses. Come to Jesus. It's been repeated. Come to the Savior. Come to the One who promises you the waters that quench your thirsty soul, the milk of your spiritual health, the wine of joy in the Lord, the bread that gives life to the soul in Christ.

And that call to come to Him has been given now. Now, don't ignore the call. Don't let another Lord's Day go by without buying and eating that which truly satisfies.

[28 : 57] And for you who have responded in faith to that call of Jesus to come, to come to Him in the poverty of your spirit, well, give praise. Give praise to God for His having called you.

yes, undeserved though you are of that call. Because you know that yes, in eternity, you'll never cease to praise Him for that call.

You'll know that eternity of praise, yes, praising Him because He called you and blessed you with every spiritual blessing in Christ in that everlasting covenant with you.

And if that's that eternal prospect that lies before you, well, make it a present reality now as you live for Him, as you rejoice in what's good for your soul, that which has been given to you freely in Christ.

So give Him the glory, give Him the praise for all His goodness to you. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we hear that call to come to you, to come by faith, to come to know the living Lord Jesus.

[30 : 08] May it be that all here this morning have heard that call. Come to the Savior. I know the blessing of everlasting life, of peace, of that rest in the Lord Jesus.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue to sing praise to you now. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, we've been singing of, or rather, reading of everyone who thirsts to come, to come to God.

Well, let's sing in Psalm 42 on that theme, page 53. Page 53, we'll sing the first five verses. The tune is finert.

As pants the deer for flowing streams, so longs my soul, O God, for you. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I meet with God and you? 1 to 5, Psalm 42, to God's praise.

God bless you.

[31 : 21] Amen. In II... I know. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 59] Thank you.

Thank you. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.